



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs  
Summary Meeting Minutes  
February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**I. Call to Order & Introductions:** Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to please stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged in and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. All in attendance gave brief introductions.

**II. Approval of Minutes:** Jerry Godwin, Vice Chair, motioned for the January Meeting Summary Minutes to be approved. Rich Fales, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the January Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes will be online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva).

**III. Planning for Montgomery County Public Libraries Veteran Recognition for Month of May (Memorial Day) and Month of November (Veterans Day) ~ Parker Hamilton, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries:** Parker Hamilton understands that the Commission has recommended to County Executive Isiah Leggett that a Veterans collection be established in the public libraries. Ms. Hamilton spoke of a display that was located at the Kensington Park library for last year's Veteran's Day during the month of November. The display featured an American flag, boots, uniforms, books, and a children's collection. All other library branches had similar displays. Ms. Hamilton asked Commissioners for their ideas and what their vision is for having displays in the public libraries for the month of May for Memorial Day and for the month of November for Veteran's Day. The libraries have books, videotapes and DVD's, but would like to feature other materials and artifacts. Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, suggested making the display more interactive by having a panel discussion, having a TV showing various veterans programs, and having children discuss the affects of their parent's deployment. Mauri Hamilton, Commissioner, suggested purchasing some artifacts, such as uniforms and boots, at Sunny's Surplus. Lee Ann Doerflinger, Parent, said she would like to donate items to the library that belonged to her son, Thomas Doerflinger, who was killed in action in Operation Iraqi Freedom with the condition that it be properly labeled. Pending the County allowing this, Betsy Luecking, Staff, suggested that donations be sought via a news advisory through the Public Information Office (PIO), which could also be run in the Gazette and posted on the Veterans Affairs website. Betsy asked Mrs. Doerflinger to contact the Gold Star Mothers regarding donations. Ms. Hamilton suggested asking individuals or families to adopt and take ownership of the display cases. Mauri asked Demetri Paris, Veteran of the Battle of the Bulge, if he and others would be willing to participate in a panel discussion or be available to answer questions. Mr. Paris said he would and also offered to loan items of memorabilia from the Battle of the Bugle. Ms. Hamilton said she will discuss with PIO the option of taping a series of programs to air in conjunction with the library displays with the tapes also being available for checking out. Bill Gray, Chair, suggested contacting Greg Hamilton about showing veterans programs he has created for Montgomery Community Television. Ms. Hamilton asked for volunteers to assist with getting the displays ready for Memorial Day. Rich Schiffauer volunteered to assist with this project. Carl Bedell, Army Veteran, suggested decorating the military shelves in the libraries with streamers and flags on a permanent basis. Jane noted it is important to differentiate the meanings between Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Mauri suggested reviewing the proclamations for Memorial Day and Veterans Day and use them to describe

the mission and purpose of the events. Jane also suggested memorializing the lives of the soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan by posting their names and information in the libraries from the towns they were from. Mauri asked to include Vietnam veterans as well. He added that the NY Times every quarter prints the pictures of individuals who were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and asked if the Gazette could do something similar. Sensitivity is an issue and the Commission needs to reach out to the families of fallen soldiers prior to putting their names in the library.

**IV. Chair and Vice Chair Report – Bill Gray, Chair, and Jerry Godwin, Vice-Chair:** Bill Gray, Chair, noted that Jane McCarthy, Commissioner, drafted a letter to the County Executive requesting that a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic be located in Montgomery County and not on a military base. The letter was submitted to the County Executive on February 5<sup>th</sup>. Ann Humphrey, Office of Rep. Chris Van Hollen, said that Rep. Van Hollen would like to be involved with this issue.

The County Executive is scheduled to sign Bill 46-09 into law on February 18<sup>th</sup>. The law establishes a hiring preference for veterans with disabilities, people with disabilities, and veterans. The preference is for every job that is posted in the merit system. All Commissioners are invited to the signing of the bill.

Jerry Godwin, Vice Chair, received a proposal lead from Rich Schiffauer from the Small Business Administration (SBA) to establish a Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) in Montgomery County. The purpose of the VBOC is to provide entrepreneurship, skills, and mentoring for veterans who want to start or expand their business. The program started in 1999, but no VBOC has been established in the capital region as of yet. Due to the short time frame for submitting the proposal it was though unfeasible to submit it at this time. Jerry has been in contact with the SBA to discuss their funding cycles and other programs available. The Commission has included in testimony to the County Executive that all County departments should look for federal funding opportunities. It was suggested to send a letter to the County Executive to reinforce this point.

**V. Organizing A Commission On Veterans' Affairs Speaker's Bureau:** A handout was given on how to set up a Speakers Bureau. Pete Esker was unable to attend the meeting and will speak about this topic at the March meeting.

**VI. Project Updates:** None.

**VII. Updates / Motions for Commission Action:** A housing issue was discussed for the Commission to take action on. The VA Supported Housing (VASH) program will be receiving vouchers sometime this summer. The vouchers are available to homeless veterans who are living in a shelter, living outside, or living with a family or friend and who lacks the financial resources to acquire their housing. For the past two years the VA has distributed 10,000 vouchers nationwide. Two years ago, the DC VA Medical Center received 105 vouchers. Last year they received 245 years. They are expected to receive 300 vouchers this year. Last year both Fairfax and Prince George's Counties received 35 vouchers each with the rest going to the DC VA Medical Center. Montgomery County homeless veterans must work with the DC Housing Authority to receive housing in Montgomery County, which can take between six to eight months. If vouchers are issued directly to Montgomery County Housing Authority then housing could be provided within six weeks. Jane McCarthy made a motion for the Commission to draft a letter to the County Executive recommending that the County ask the VA for 35 housing vouchers be given directly to the Housing Opportunities Commission and distributed by them. Rich Fales seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

### **VIII. Roundtable:**

Updates from the Department of Veterans Affairs:

- Starting March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010 a National Veteran's Homeless Hotline will be available for individuals to get information regarding homeless services available across the country as well as local VA Medical Center homeless services. The Hotline is 1-877-424-3838 (Toll Free).
- A new position, tentatively titled "Jail Outreach Social Worker", is being added to most VA Medical Centers. The Social Worker will outreach to local jails to engage veterans and set them up with services and programs upon release from jail.
- The Washington, DC VA Medical Center is hosting a large veterans outreach program on March 13<sup>th</sup>, which is the same day as the DC National Guard Armory holds their monthly drills. The National Guard has made the event part of the drill and the VA is expected to catch 600+ Guardsmen as well as veterans in the area.

Carl Bedell, Army Veteran, spoke of an organization in Brookeville, MD called Hero Dogs that trains service animals for injured service members. Hero Dogs is still pending a 501(c)(3) application and is looking for individuals to volunteer for the Board of Directors and to assist in training the service animals. For more information, visit [www.hero-dogs.org](http://www.hero-dogs.org).

**Adjournment:** 8:00 p.m.

Respectively submitted,  
Carly Clem, OSC  
Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010, from 6:30pm to 8:00pm at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Tan Conference Room